

Thu 17th Apr 2014

Bishop's Stortford FC Match Report



Bishop's Stortford FC



Hitchin Town FC



Bishop 's Stortford 2 - 2 Hitchin Town AET (4-3 Penalties) : HT 0 - 1 : Att 367

HERTS CHARITY CUP – FINAL

Stortford lifted the Hertfordshire FA Charity Cup for the third time in the last four years when they edged past Hitchin Town on penalties at the County Ground Letchworth. The Final saw both sides have periods of domination over the 90 minutes and extra time. The Calor Gas Southern League Premier Division side took an early lead and could have been well ahead at the break before the Blues came back strongly in the second half equalising from the spot on the hour mark.

The Blues should have won the tie by the end of the 90 minutes but the scores remained level and then after both sides had traded goals early in the first period of extra time the Canaries were on top in the second period of extra time without scoring. In the penalty shoot-out that followed Hitchin 's Charlie Smith shot wide and Joe Wright saved from Alasan Ann whilst only Matt Johnson missed out for the Blues when striking the ball over the bar.

The starting line up for the Blues didn 't include Sean Francis who had suffered a head injury in the match at Havant & Waterlooville earlier in the week but George Allen returned to central defence. Also missing were Johnny Herd and Sam Cutler who were unavailable whilst Matt Johnson returned after sitting out the Havant & Waterlooville match and skippered the team as Reece Prestedge missed the Final due to a slight injury.

It was a disastrous start for Stortford who never settled at all in the first half. They fell behind in the 6th minute after a poor pass inside his own penalty area by Callum McNaughton gave the ball away. Callum Donnelly and Matt Lench almost took advantage before LEWIS ROLFE slammed the ball past Joe Wright from 12 yards (0-1).

Hitchin, who were kicking down the slope, went close on a number of occasions to add to their lead. A header from Stuart Pearson in the 23rd minute following a free-kick just cleared the bar with Joe Wright off his line and then Callum Donnelly was close with a shot when receiving a through pass from Matt Lench five minutes later.

With Stortford showing no signs of awakening from their lethargic display Rod Stringer made a double substitution in the 38th minute with Jake Hall replacing Andre Costa and Harry Baker coming on for an injured Cliff Akurang.

The closest Stortford came to scoring before the break was after Jordan Brown had been on a strong run on the left. After he had cut inside, the ball was transferred to Jake Hall whose shot took a deflection off of defender Alasan Ann and keeper Tahj Bell made a fine save tipping it over the bar.

Just before the interval Simon Martin was off target with a chance for Hitchin after linking with Callum Donnelly following a

corner.

Half time: 1-0

The pendulum swung the other way from the restart as Stortford took charge of the proceedings. Within the first thirty seconds of the second half a cross from the right by Michael Richens found Ashley Miller in front of goal but his shot was lifted over the bar from six yards.

Then in the 52nd minute Miller featured again when he ran through to fasten on to a pass from Harry Baker but shot narrowly over the top. The equaliser from the spot arrived on the hour. Substitute Harry Baker ran on to a pass from Jake Hall on the right inside edge of the box and moving towards goal was pushed in the back by defender Alasan Ann. Referee Lee Marshallsay awarded a penalty which BRIAN WOODALL drove down the middle of the goal (1-1).

The Blues continued to press the Canaries and when Woodall squared the ball to Baker, Hitchin stopper Bell turned the 20 yard shot over the bar. Michael Richens was then close with a strong drive

Joe Wright had to make an excellent save in the 65th minute when Hitchin 's Dan Webb rounded off a swift attack with a shot from inside the box but the Blues came back five minutes later at the other end as Matt Johnson linked with Harry Baker for the latter to fire in a shot that struck the bar and over.

Stortford almost clinched the tie two minutes from time after Michael Richens crossed in from the right and Jake Hall 's shot was close past the near post.

Full time: 1-1

The Blues carried on pressing at the start of extra time and netted their second goal of the evening in the 93rd minute. A 25 yard free-kick by Michael Richens came back high off of Tahj Bell' s left hand upright and JAKE HALL, with his first Stortford goal, bundled in the rebound via the underside of the bar (2-1).

Hitchin 's speedy substitute Gary Wharton found the side-netting after a run a minute later and the Canaries drew level in the 97th minute. Substitute Michael King switched play to Matt Lench on the right and when the ball came into the box a clearance fell to SAM BARKER who fiercely drove the ball into the bottom corner of the net (2-2).

Brian Woodall nearly restored the Blues lead coming up to the break in extra time but the striker saw his effort from an acute angle held by Bell.

Half time extra time: 2-2

The second period was a story of Hitchin looking the more likely to take the trophy. In the 108th minute Gary Wharton slammed the ball against the Stortford bar after a George Allen slip and five minutes from the end a Wharton shot from a few yards inside the box was turned aside for a corner at full length by Joe Wright diving to his right.

Full time extra time: 2-2

The sequence of the penalties that followed in the shoot-out was as follows:-

Matt Lench (Hitchin Town) scored (0-1)
Anthony Church (Bishop ' s Stortford) scored (1-1)
Charlie Smith (Hitchin Town) shot wide (1-1)
Matt Johnson (Bishop ' s Stortford) shot over the bar (1-1)
Garry Jones (Hitchin Town) scored (1-2)
Michael Richens (Bishop ' s Stortford) scored (2-2)
Josh Bickerstaff (Hitchin Town) scored (2-3)
Harry Baker (Bishop ' s Stortford) scored (3-3)
Alasan Ann (Hitchin Town) shot saved by Joe Wright (3-3)
Brian Woodall (Bishop ' s Stortford) scored (4-3)

At the end of the Final Matt Johnson was presented with the Cup by Hertfordshire FA Official Eddie Dowber.

There were no cards shown to Stortford players during the tie but Hitchin ' s Callum Donnelly, Alasan Ann and Josh Bickerstaff were cautioned.

BISHOP ' S STORTFORD: Joe Wright; Ashley Miller (sub – Josh Fagbohun 78 mins); Jordan Brown; George Allen; Callum McNaughton; Michael Richens; Matt Johnson; Anthony Church; Brian Woodall; Cliff Akurang (sub – Harry Baker 38 mins); Andre Costa (sub – Jake Hall 38 mins).
Unused substitutes: Luke Milbourne and Sam Cowler.

HITCHIN TOWN: Tahj Bell; Lewis Rolfe (sub – Garry Jones 93 mins); Josh Bickerstaff; Alasan Ann; Dan Webb; Stuart Pearson; Charlie Smith; Callum Donnelly (sub – Gary Wharton 70 mins); Simon Martin (sub – Michael King 57 mins); Sam Barker; Matt Lench.
Unused substitutes: Nick Burtenshaw and Martin Bennett.